The Many Adventures, And Spankings, of Princess Lyra
Chapter III: A Good Scolding, a Good Scrubbing, and a Good Spanking

Six of the castle guards were already dead. Another three were grievously injured.

When King Niall ordered Lochru to attend to the wounded, the wild-eyed druid banged his staff against the ground, grumbling under his breath. “I was the apprentice of the great Mug Ruith himself, the Slave of the Wheel. Lochru is no common healer.”

Niall silenced the druid with a single look. “Then surely, that means Lochru must be an uncommonly skilled healer. Is that not so, helpful druid?”

Lochru gripped his staff tight in both hands, until his gnarled hands turned white. “You are as wise as ever, High King Niall.”

Lyra sat by Master Kael’s side as his fiery burns and cuts were attended by Lochru. The cut on her own thigh was deemed to be minor, so a servant girl was ordered to pour wine on the gash, then sew it closed. Lyra grit her teeth as she felt the sewing needle prick her thigh. “Will Master Kael be all right?”

Lochru sniffed, stretching up Kael’s arm to reveal ragged, red burns left by the fire-breathing assassin. “He will suffer terrible agonies from these burns for the next week, but the wounds are not deep. A poultice of *athair thalún* will protect him against evil spirits.”

Kael grit his teeth as Lochru poked and prodded his burns. “Evil spirits are not fond of wildflowers?”

“No, they are not. Avoid straining yourself until the scars have closed. And if you care to use your sword arm ever again, I suggest stretching your hand and fingers every morning to keep the burned flesh from shriveling. But I warn you, it will be unbearable pain.”

Kael flexed the fingers on his right hand. “Then I will have to bear it. A small price to pay.”

Lyra bowed her head. “If only I’d been able to cut one of them down.”

Lyra was surprised when she felt a strong hand resting on her shoulder from behind, and turned to find her father. “Oh? You seemed to be holding your own against the assassin leader.”

Springing to her feet, Lyra buried her face in her father’s chest, clinging tight to his waist. “*Daidí!* I was so frightened! I was sure they’d killed mother, right from the start.”

Queen Hindiu stood from her bed in the infirmary, and joined the embrace. “Yet we are all alive. Brave men spilled their life blood for us this day, but they did not die in vain. But, beloved, how did you know we were in danger?”

Still trapped in his daughter's bear hug, King Niall shrugged. "I did not know. But last night, I had a terrible dream. I saw you, Lyra, fighting with a sword, and was sure it was a premonition that you were in some sort of trouble. So we made a quick march back to Tara Hill."

Lyra pulled back from her father's chest, wiping the back of her hand against her eyes. "But…I am in trouble. Before everything happened, Mother said—she promised me that I would get a…get a spanking tonight. I was so worried about being spanked, I barely paid any attention to the dancers. If only I'd been more alert, I might have been able to warn the guards."

King Niall cradled Lyra by the back of her head. "My *cailín báire*, you defended yourself long enough for me to arrive, and protected your grandmother. You have nothing to be ashamed of, Princess Lyra."

Lyra felt her heart swell, but as she glanced at her mother, she bowed her head. "No, father. I *am* ashamed. I should have taken my lessons in the sword more seriously. This morning I…I played at combat in the fencing hall."

King Niall stroked Lyra's cheek, then gently nudged her chin upwards to guide her eyes upwards. "A little play fighting? That is no great sin."

Lyra shook her head. "It was more than simple play. I deliberately disobeyed Master Kael, and used a sharp blade without supervision. Master Kael…he had to spank me. And even though I knew I had done wrong, still I was defiant. Mother, Father, I promised that I would obey Master Kael, and accept his discipline. Now, you must keep your promise, and…and…"

King Niall looked searchingly into his daughter's eyes.

Queen Hindiu squeezed Lyra's arm gently, just below the shoulder. "Lyra, after everything that has happened? You survived a deadly attack. There is no need to punish you anymore. You are no longer a spoiled child."

Lyra shook her head. "But I am a princess. And a princess must be held accountable for breaking her word. Father, what happened tonight changes a lot of things, but…it doesn't change the oath I made to you. I…I still think I should be punished…please…"

King Niall cupped both of Lyra's hands in his. "Lyra, if I must spank you, then I will. But it will have to be a real spanking. Not a few love taps, like when you were a child. You are too old for that now…This will be the spanking of your life, even worse than the time you disobeyed me, and disguised yourself as a boy to enter the tourney. Knowing that, will you still ask this of me? Only say that you wish to be spared the spanking, and I will forgive you. But, if you believe this is right…then speak from the heart. Do you truly wish to be spanked?"

At the mention of the trouble with the tournament, Lyra's tongue felt thick and heavy. "Yes…Please, my Lord, my King…you must spank me, again—soundly—just as I deserve. I will not let it be said that I am a spoiled princess."

Master Kael shifted uncomfortably on the cot, glowering at the wide-eyed druid. "Perhaps we should retire, Lochru? This is a family matter, after all."

Lyra's cheeks flushed, but she shook her head. "No, Master Kael. I'd rather…I would like you to join us, if you would. I think I can better endure what is coming if I know you are there. May he please come too, Father?"

King Niall nodded. "I have no objections. Master Kael, I will not order you to follow. But if you wish to stand by Lyra's side through her time of trouble, I would be honored."

Kael stood from his cot, and knelt. "The honor is mine. By your leave, my Lord, I will follow you."

King Niall finally let go of Lyra, and straightened to his full height. "Then let it be done. Lyra, your courage never ceases to amaze me. Therefore, I will do as you have asked, and punish you justly. First, go ask the servants to give you a good scrubbing. Second, as soon as you are finished washing, fetch a wooden chair from the hall, and carry it to your room. And finally…we will see this matter through to the end."

Lyra nodded, and marched out of the infirmary, her heart thumping faster with each step.

As soon as she arrived at the bathhouse, two servants set to work undressing her. The younger serving girl cooed at the sight of Lyra's backside, but the older serving woman shushed her. Lyra guessed that her frequently spanked behind would be the second most popular topic of discussion in the serving hall tonight, right behind the failed assassination attempt. Lyra listened with pretend indifference as the two serving women chattered about all the excitement for the day. She answered their questions about her adventure politely, but didn't feel particularly talkative.

After the bath, Lyra allowed herself to be dressed in a fresh linen shift and clean wool tunic.

In the dining hall, she found an armless wooden chair, decorated with a carving of a ram, encircled by a serpent. As Lyra traced her finger across the carving, she whispered a soft prayer. "Cernunnos, give me strength…and grant me the courage of a man."

As Lyra reached her chamber door, it opened before her, and Queen Hindiu gestured for her to enter. Lyra set down the chair in the center of her private bedroom. There was a tapestry on the wall, depicting a red-headed girl dressed in chain mail, who was being spanked bare-bottomed before an assembly of kings, knights, lords, and ladies, who all watched the scene with solemn approval. It had been commissioned for Princess Lyra as a birthday gift to commemorate her

famous performance, and her infamous exposure as a girl in disguise, during the Aonach Tailteann, the traditional summer festival games held in County Meath.

Master Kael was seated on Lyra's bed. King Niall stood by the narrow window, watching the sunset redden the rolling hills. Lyra shuffled her feet. "I'm ready, father."

The King turned to face his shame-faced daughter, his voice calm. "Princess Lyra, you have been disobedient, foolhardy, and obstinate. And now, you will be punished accordingly. Your mother will be the first to spank you. Submit yourself to her hand, and accept her correction."

Lyra flinched at the tone of her father's words, but she saw no disappointment in his eyes. Kael, for his part, remained silent, but there was something reassuring about his quiet concern. Queen Hindiu looked genuinely sorry for her daughter, but she stepped forward, and steeled herself. "Lyra, I have decided to spank you just the way I always have, since you were only a wee babe, but this will only be a foretaste of what your father has in store for you. I will start with my hand. Gird your loins, and lie across my lap."

Lyra tightened her lips to a thin line. "Gird your loins," had long had a double-meaning when Lyra was in trouble. It meant to hike up the skirt of your tunic, to prepare for battle. But in Lyra's case, it meant literally hiking up her skirts, all the way above her bottom, to expose her thin linen shift. As Lyra tucked the hem of her tunic skirt into her belt, she felt the dainty fabric of her underclothes, and knew they would provide scant protection from her mother's hand.

Lyra settled into the usual position over her mother's knees, resting her palms against the cold stone floor. As she glanced up, she noticed Kael watching her closely, and turned her face away. Suddenly, she regretted asking him to witness this, wishing she could kick herself. How would Kael ever be able to think of Lyra as anything but a naughty child after watching…what was about to happen?

Lyra grit her teeth. *"And this is only the beginning!"* she thought.

Hindiu swatted Lyra's upturned bottom, though with only a little force. Nevertheless, Lyra flinched, expecting a strong blow right from the start. Hindu patted her daughter's backside experimentally. "Fifteen years old—a woman now—and yet, some things never change. From time to time…you still need a spanking from Mummy."

At the sound of the word "Mummy," Lyra's cheeks burned with embarrassment. Her stomach was fluttering with a mix of nerves and resignation, but she held herself as still as she could.

This position made her feel suddenly childish, and no matter how hard she tried not to look at either Father or Master Keel, Lyra felt their eyes on her.

Hindiu placed a reassuring hand on Lyra's back, pinning her skirts in place, and patted Lyra across her upper thighs. "You know why we're doing this, don't you, dear? Tell me what you did wrong, and why you deserve this spanking."

Lyra mumbled, then forced herself to answer. "Yes, Mother. I disobeyed Master Kael. I was reckless."

Hindiu planted two firm swats across each of Lyra's butt-cheeks, this time using her full strength. "That's right. You're not a little girl anymore, Lyra. You must obey your elders, and listen to your betters. And as a daughter of royalty, you bear special responsibilities. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Mother," Lyra said, her voice trembling but sincere.

Hindu landed a hard slap with a full swing of her arm, which resounded with a sharp crack. Lyra flinched, her hands gripping the edge of the chair for support. She was always surprised by the force her mother could muster, but Lyra wasn't much bothered by the pain. What was harder to bear was her humbling position: to be spanked and scolded like a naughty child was almost too much to endure. Lyra squeaked, then bit her lip.

Hindiu's arm rose and fell at a steady pace, and she clicked her tongue, without pausing the spanking. "Tsk, tsk. Feeling it already? Good to know I haven't lost my touch. Answer me, Lyra, why is it important to follow the rules?"

As she felt a sharp clap, Lyra set her jaw, then forced herself to answer, her voice slightly strained. "Because…because rules keep us safe. I put myself in danger."

"And what happens to naughty little girls who ignore the rules?"

Lyra's cheeks flushed hot and red with a pang of fresh shame. "They get…*we* get spankings, Mother…because I've been a naughty little girl."

Hindiu paused, then patted Lyra's bottom, while stroking her gently against the small of her back with her free hand. "That's right, dear. And as much as it pains me to do this, I want you to remember this lesson. Do you promise to be more careful in the future?"

Lyra grumbled something under her breath. After Hindiu delivered another firm wallop, Lyra yelped, then answered in earnest. "I promise, Mother! I'll listen to Master Kael. I'll be good!"

Hindiu nodded, satisfied. "I believe you, Lyra. But we're not quite done yet. I'm going to paint this pale, snow-white *tóin* of yours bright red…a proper shade to match your hair!"

With that, the Queen flipped up her daughter's shift, exposing Lyra's slender, toned, lily-white backside, which was now flushed to a rosy pink. As Lyra felt her shift being pulled up, she

realized that her bottom was protected by nothing more than a thin loin cloth. Lyra groaned, with an unmistakable note of whiny pleading in her voice.

In answer, Hindiu clapped Lyra's posterior twice, once across each buttock. "Have something to say on the matter?"

Lyra shook her head. "No, ma'am. I submit to your judgment. Please, spank me as you think I deserve."

Hindiu beamed, casually exhaled onto her palm, then patted Lyra's bottom affectionately, with a look that suggested she was quite proud of her daughter and quite pleased with her own work. "Good girl…And I will most certainly spank you as I deem fit, whenever you need it."

With that, Hindiu began to spank slowly, and gradually built up the pace. Lyra knew from first-hand experience that, under ordinary circumstances, this would have been the finale of a spanking from mother, at least for Lyra's usual sort of disobedience in childhood. Lyra grit her teeth, determined to take the spanking without struggling or crying, though she felt her eyes starting to water already.

Hindiu spanked firm and fast, reaching the tempo of a wild horse's gallop, before winding up a full swing of her arm to finish with a final, shuddering swat across the center of Lyra's seat. Hindiu flexed her fingers, then petted Lyra across her bottom, stroking her gently. "Stand up now, dear. Hands on your head, just like when you were in timeout as a little girl."

Lyra obeyed, her cheeks burning hot at both ends. Knowing full well what was coming next, Lyra placed her hands on her head, and stood at attention.

Without ceremony, Hindiu pulled out one of her own hair pins and neatly pinned up Lyra's skirts at the back, both tunic and skirt. "Now, I promised you a paddling this morning. I didn't know then that your father would be home in time to help me deal with you. Nevertheless, before you feel the touch of his sword belt…I'm giving you a taste of my old wooden hairbrush. Go and fetch it from your bedside chest."

Feeling her throat go tight, Lyra marched to the side of her bed, and found her mother's wooden hairbrush on the top of her clothes chest. An ornate pattern of celtic knots were engraved in the back, which Lyra knew could leave a matching pattern all across a certain princess's posterior.

After Lyra handed her mother the hairbrush, she put her hands back on her head. Hindu slapped the back of the hairbrush against the palm of her hand. "Stradle my legs, lass. Hands on my shoulders, and look me in the eyes."

Lyra swallowed, and settled down on her mother's lap, chest-to-chest. As if pulling close for a hug, Lyra rested her hands on her mother's chest, and felt her face burn beet red as she though

about how she could still be spanked to tears by this short, dainty little woman could still spank Lyra to tears, despite the Princess's fifteen years.

Hindiu reached around and tapped the hairbrush against Lyra's left buttock. "You've been surprisingly obedient, so I will spare you the full number of strokes you would normally receive for deliberate disobedience. But only if you follow my instructions with perfect restraint. Do you understand, little princess?"

With a quiver of anticipation, Lyra nodded, and muttered a quiet, "Yes, Mummy."

Looking Lyra right in the eye, Hindi landed the hairbrush with a sharp pop. Lyra stiffened, but resisted the urge to jump up off her mother's lap and hop around the room clutching her buttocks. Sure enough, Lyra felt the distinct impression of the decorative pattern of lines carved into the back of the brush. Hindu shook her head, and began to deal firm spanks, timing each one to add emphasis to her lecturing tone. "Bad girl. Bad, bad, *bad* little girl. Stubborn. Disobedient. Obstinate. Thoughtless. Wreckless. Foolhardy."

Pursing her lips to resist the urge to scream, Lyra clung tight to her mother's shoulders. When her mother paused, Lyra dared to hope it was over. "I'm sorry, Mummy!"

Hindu shook her head, and switched the hairbrush from her right to her left hand, and patted it against Lyra's right buttock.. "You're sorry now. But after the pain of this spanking fades, are you going to forget this sorrow? Are you going to forget to obey your master in all things?"

As she felt the fresh marks rise to a collection of mottled, fiery red welts across her left buttock, Lyra shook her head, tears dripping down her face. "No, Mommy! I'll remember! I promise."

Mother flipped the brush to tickle the bristles along Lyra's bottom. "And what will you get, if you forget?"

As she felt the gentle circular strokes of the brush, Lyra keenly aware of the welts that covered her left buttock, in contrast to her relatively unmarked right buttock. "I'll get a…another spanking, Mummy."

"And have we finished *this* spanking yet, Lyra?"

"...No, Mummy."

Coolly, Mother switched the hairbrush to her left hand, and delivered a firm stroke across Lyra's right buttock. Lyra could only hope this marked the halfway point, at least. Lyra yelped and whimpered, but forced herself to hold still. But she was forced to look into her mother's gazing eyes after each stroke, and finally, Lyra laid her head on her mother's shoulder, and wept softly. "Sorry…I'm so sorry…I've been a bad daughter."

Finally, Queen Hindiu finished the final stroke, leaving Lyra with a bright red right buttock, perfectly matching her left buttock. Setting aside the hairbrush, Queen Hindiu cradled Lyra's face in her hands. "Good girl…brave girl. You've never been a bad daughter. But you are to be princess, and so you must be chastised when you err, to teach you to walk the right path. What have you learned?"

Lyra sniffled. "By disobeying master Kael…I also dishonored you and father."

Queen Hindiu kissed Lyra softly on each cheek. "Indeed, and for that I have chastened you soundly. But you have also failed to submit in perfect obedience to your Lord and King, and must pay the full penalty for your error.

"You've been very brave, Lyra. But your father must still deal with you, not as a naughty little girl, but as a royal princess, for dereliction of your duties. I'm afraid he will have to be…more severe with you."

Then, Hindiu undid Lyra's loin cloth, and pulled it away, folding the thin strip of cloth neatly in her lap. Hindiu stood, her expression softening as she brushed a stray strand of hair from Lyra's face. "You will be horse whipped, on your bare bottom, Lyra. That's how your father always punishes me for my misdeeds, and that is how you must be punished, as befits your age."

Lyra swallowed, feeling her stomach twisting at the words. She had been spanked bare bottom before, but now she knew that, from now on, she could expect them as part of the standard penalty for disobedience. But Lyra nodded. "I understand, Mother."

Slowly, deliberately, Hindiu reached around and unclasped the loop of her daughter's night shift. Lyra squeaked, and grasped at the hem. "No! Not this! Anything but this! Not in front of Master Kael!"

Master Kael shot to his feet, and barked in his best military voice. "Disgraceful! A good soldier doesn't defy orders. I won't stand to see any pupil of mine turn craven. Now, obey your mother, and finish what you started, Lyra."

With a whimpering whine, Lyra released her grasp on her shift. "Yes, Master Kael."

Lyra closed her eyes as she felt the cloth being lifted up and over her head, and felt a chill as she stood naked in the middle of the room. Unable to look Master Kael or her mother in the eyes, Lyra stared at her toes. The stone felt cold against her bare feet. "Forgive my lapse of cowardace. I will obey."

Hindiu gestured to King Niall. "Then go and ask your king to administer his justice."

As she approached her father, Lyra desperately wanted to cover her front, but knew from past experience to keep her hands tightly folded behind her back. She had only been punished this way once before.

Lyra's breath caught as she felt her father's stern eyes gazing down at her nude form, but she forced herself to take a deep breath. "Father—err—m-my King? I have disobeyed your commands. I have broken my oath. I beg your mercy…"

Lyra trembled as the King looked down at her. She felt exposed, vulnerable, but also strangely at peace. She knew that this was her act of penance, but that didn't make the thought of the whipping any less terrifying.

King Niall put a hand on his daughter's waist at either side. "Princess Lyra, you have not fully lived up to your duties, and so must pay the price. You will receive thirty lashes, two strokes for each of your fifteen years. It will not be easy to endure, but once you have endured this trial, you will have fully atoned for your debt, once and for all. Now, kneel upon the seat, face toward the bed, and hold tight to the back for support."

Lyra whined softly, but with an effort, she bowed her head, and gave the answer she knew was expected of her. "Yes, your majesty. Please, do what you must with me."

Wobbling, Lyra marched toward the chair and lifted herself up to kneel on the seat.

Lyra wanted to be calm, stoic, and poised, like a royal princess, but as she felt all eyes in the room on her, her heart nearly burst. As tears streamed from her eyes, she twisted to look at her father, expecting to see a stern face, without mercy. "...I'm sorry, *Daidí."*

Gently, King Niall stroked the belt across his daughter's shivering backside. "I know you are, *a stóirín*. My brave little heart…"

Queen Hindiu appeared at Lyra's side, and held up a thin cord of deer-skin leather. Lyra bit down on it, knowing that she would need it to resist the urge to bite her tongue. Then, out of the corner of her eye, she saw her father, raising the belt high. "...Princess Lyra, the time to face this trial has come. Prepare yourself."

As Lyra leaned forward and clutched the back of the chair, she saw Master Kael looking her right in the eye. Gritting her teeth, Lyra closed her eyes, praying a desperate, foolish wish to the gods. *"Please, make me invisible!"*

The first lash of the belt stuck, ripping across the exposed flesh of both her buttocks with enough force to raise a fresh weal. Lyra's eyes popped open as she screamed. The sound was muffled slightly by the leather cord, but she managed to send a droplet of spit flying. Spotting Master Kael, Lyra quickly laid her head against the back of the chair, and forced her eyelids to shut tight.

Silently, King Niall delivered a second stroke of the belt. As she felt the heavy impact, Lyra jolted with a grunt, then groaned. Then, as the second welt slowly rose across her lower buttocks, Lyra batted the tops of her feet against the wooden seat behind her, but she resisted the urge to leave position.

Her resolve was tested after the third blow, which landed low across her upper thighs. Lyra reared her head back, seething, sending her hair and the tips of the leather cord flying about her freckled, tear-stained face

Master Kael muttered. “Hold fast, lass.”

Lyra let her eyes flutter open, then turned her face away, whinging. She saw a blinding flash of motion as her father delivered the fourth lash, and the world seemed to vanish in a blinding red flash of light. Choking, Lyra thrust forward, barely catching herself against the back of the seat, and sent the heavy chair rocking.

The fifth stroke came in quick succession.

Nearly gagging on tears, Lyra clutched the sides of the chair, only wanting to stand up and run far away. But then she felt her father’s hand against the back of her skull, strong, but gentle. Turning to look at him, Lyra sensed the unspoken censure in his gesture. *“No. I can do better. I must be strong,”* thought Lyra.

Blinking back tears, Lyra allowed her father to guide her back into a proper position, and this time, as she clung tight to the back of the chair, she held her head up, and looked Master Kael in the eye. *“A wise swordsman keeps both eyes on his opponent. Hold a steady stance, and think only of the next stroke,”* thought Lyra.

After the sixth lash landed, Lyra tensed once, but didn’t writhe as badly as before. Lyra felt a trickle of something wet dripping down along her buttock, in sharp contrast to the dry, scorching sensation that covered her entire backside. Dimly, she wondered if it was blood. But as she concentrated on the sensation, she concluded that it couldn’t be.

No. The high king’s justice was firm. But it was never needlessly cruel. Lyra held her head steady, and kept her eyes on Master Kael.

She was fully prepared for the eighth stroke, and felt another wet droplet.

Finally, King Niall broke his silence. “We will take a brief respite. My Queen, attend to the Princess’s wounds.”

With a curtsey, Hindu fetched a clean cloth and dipped it in a jug of water on the windowsill.

At the mention of the word “wounds,” Lyra dared to take a glimpse of her behind. But before she could get a good look, Queen Hindiu arrived, pressing the damp cloth against her daughter’s hot hindquarters. “It’s not a cut. Only a burst blister. Poor thing.”

Lyra gasped, smarting as she felt the cooling touch of the water, in sharp contrast to the dry heat that encompassed her seat.

Queen Hindiu hesitated as she examined her daughter. “Please, My Lord, I know the Princess must be chastised, but…hasn’t she been punished enough? I beg of you, spare her from further pain.”

King Niall shook his head. “Princess Lyra has asked for this of her own free will, because she knows in her heart that she deserves it. Is that not so, Princess?”

Knowing that she was expected to answer, Lyra took the cord out of her mouth, then immediately dropped it by mistake. As Lyra realized her hands and knees were trembling, she felt fresh shame. She was so weak. And they weren’t even half-way through this ordeal. “Yes, my Lord. Please, you must punish me as you deem fit.”

Gently, King Niall stroked his belt along his daughter’s buttocks. “You have barely endured eight lashes. How can you possibly endure another seventeen?”

Lyra felt a shiver travel up her spine, her whole body rattling. “I must face my doom…though I fear my flesh may prove too weak.”

Tensing, Lyra felt her father press his hand between her shoulder blades. But she kept her eyes forward, fixed on Master Kael. King Niall’s voice boomed from behind her. “Princess Lyra, you must face the King’s wrath, but I am not without pity. As High King, I must deliver justice, but I am also your father. Please, Lyra, plea for mercy, and I will grant it.”

Lyra steadied her breath. “But, My Lord…if I am ever to make a fine swordsman, I must be brave, and endure.”

Master Kael scoffed. “Bah. Is that what this is about? A wise swordsman can admit when he’s licked. You’ve forgotten the first lesson of the sword. No swordsman is invincible. To admit weakness is the first step on the long path to strength.”

Lyra sniffed, and tossed her hair aside. “That may be, Master Kael, but I am a swords *woman.* And as a woman, it is my duty to submit to chastisement from the man who is my lord and sire. And as a Princess, I especially cannot be let off lightly, for I am of the *Uí Néill*.”

Straightening her back, Lyra turned to face her father. “My Lord, please, we must finish what we have begun. Chastise me soundly, and do not spare me…at least, do not spare me from the punishment you deem just…”

Lyra bowed her head. “...but if you would have mercy on me, I will also accept your judgment. I am yours. Do with me what you will.”

Smiling softly, King Niall nodded. “In that case…we will continue. You will receive seven strokes. Fifteen total. If you endure them bravely, I will spare you the final fifteen strokes. Hold your head high, Princess, and fix your mind upon repentance… upon *aithrí.*”

Lyra exhaled. From the moment she had asked for this spanking, she had felt a heavy burden of guilt. Now, she felt relieved. She was grateful to be shown a degree of mercy, but the punishment was still perfectly just. Her heart swelling with gratitude, Lyra rested her hands daintily on the chair, straightened her posture, arched her back to present her bottom. “Yes, My Lord.”

As Lyra looked Master Kael in the eye, she set her jaw, knowing that she would have to focus to resist biting her tongue, without the aid of the leather cord. Lyra composed her voice, and answered in the traditional manner of the ancient celts. “Aithrím.”

King Niall delivered the ninth lash of the belt with such precision, it nearly broke Lyra’s resolve then and there. The cooling water that had been meant to sooth her blistered buttocks had also made her flesh more sensitive, adding to the stinging sensation. It was like the prickle of ten thousand needles traveling in a line across her tender “tóin.”

As her eyes bulged, Lyra inhaled, and repeated the words of repentance. “

She endured the tenth stroke without blinking. “Aithrím.”

But as she felt the eleventh, she winced. “Ah…aithrím!”

There was a painfully long pause, before the twelfth stroke caught her off guard. Lyra sucked down a breath, and felt her tensed muscles start to shake, beyond her control. “Argh! …Aaw…Aithrím!”

The unlucky thirteenth stroke cut across her upper thighs, which felt the sting far more keenly than her numbing buttocks. Lyra growled. “Graaah! Oh…hooo….Aithrím!”

The fourteenth stroke was aimed more carefully, near the upper-center of her bottom, leaving a fresh welt above the blistered sit spots which had suffered the most damage. It caught Lyra just as she was taking a breath, and she arched her head back to scream. “Aaaaiiiyeeee! …Haaaah…ah-aithrím!”

The final stroke didn’t come immediately. Lyra tensed, holding her breath as she awaited it. Finally, she looked at Master Kael, and remembering her lessons, took a deep, calming breath to prepare for battle. Even then, the stroke didn’t come. And as Lyra considered the pause, she

realized the intent. Her father had given her enough time to catch her breath. But now he was giving her time to think. As the anticipation built, she had time to dread the coming stroke, but also to welcome it. She wanted this to be over. She wanted to be punished. She wanted to be forgiven.

King Niall aimed the fifteenth and final lash perfectly along the center of Lyra's lower bottom, which was already covered by overlapping weals and blisters. Lyra felt the impact travel through her, but kept perfectly still, conscious that it was the worst pain she had ever felt in her entire life, and accepting it. Her knuckles went white as she clutched the chair, and she finally relaxed, curling and uncurling her toes. "Aithrím!"

King Niall snapped his belt, then lowered his arm to let it rest on his side. "Stand and face me, Princess Lyra."

Shakily, Lyra got up from the chair. Strangely, the pain she felt in her knees bothered her far more than her bottom at the moment. They were chafed red from kneeling for so long against the rough woodgrain.

As Lyra stood at attention, fully nude, King Niall cradled her chin with one hand, and patted the top of her head with his other hand. "You have faced my wrath, and endured your chastisement bravely. Therefore, I will spare you the full thirty strokes that you would have merited, for recalcitrance. Now, go and kneel before your instructor, and beg his forgiveness."

"Yes, My King." Lyra bowed her head, then turned to kneel before Master Kael.

The old swordsman looked taken aback. If anything, he was far more embarrassed than the nude Princess. "M'lord, I'm quite ready to forgive the poor lass. Is all this fancy ceremony truly necessary?"

King Niall answered his swordsman with a look that spoke more clearly than words. Yes, for a Princess, this was necessary.

Lyra bowed, kissing each of Master Kael's boots, before resting her forehead on her hands, lifting her hips up high in the air behind her. Even at this angle, Master Kael could make out every red line across the curves of her upturned buttocks. "Forgive my impudence, Master Kael. If you will overlook my ignoble behavior, I would be honored to continue as your student."

Kael cleared his throat. "Hem! Of course, I forgive you…I've never had a more worthy pupil."

Lyra twisted her head to peep up at Master Kael, unable to disguise her abashed smile, before she remembered to keep her face flat against the floor.

King Niall tied his belt across his waist. "Arise, Lyra. Attend to your mother."

Lyra knew that this meant that the spanking was officially over, but not the lesson. After Hindiu fussed over Lyra's bottom, assuring there were no cuts that needed mending, she pointed toward the wall. "Hmm…No need for stitches. You've done well so far, Lyra. Now, go stand against the wall, and if you don't want another smacking, better keep your hand pressed against your head, and your nose pressed against the stone, until I say otherwise."

Suddenly feeling the nakedness of her nudity, Lyra frowned, but quickly trotted to stand against the wall without argument. Of course, her mother always insisted on putting a naughty child in timeout, following their punishment.

Lyra clasped her fingers together behind her head, her face flushed and her bottom still throbbing. The cool stone felt chilly against her nose, breasts, and feet, in contrast to the radiating heat from her behind. But she focused on holding a steady stance, determined to endure this final part of her punishment with dignity.

The Queen glanced at the hearth, where the fire had died down to ashy cinders. Humming softly, the queen pulled a string above the fireplace, ringing a servant bell. Outside, a bell connected to the same string rang in unison.

Lyra froze as she realized what this meant. "No, Mother! No servants! Please!"

Hindiu cut Lyra off with two firm swats, one across each buttock. "None of that. We need a fire. You'll catch your death of cold."

Lyra turned to look at her father, her eyes wide. "But–they'll see me! *Daidí!* Don't let the servants see me like *this!* I'd rather die!"

King Niall shook his head. "Would you rather let the servants see you get another spanking for stubbornness?"

Lyra hunched her shoulders. "N-no, father?"

"Then let them see what becomes of a disobedient princess. Now, obey your mother, and no more whining."

Bowed her head, then turned to face the wall. "Yes, Father. I'll stop whining….I'm sorry, Mother."

Queen Hindiu patted Lyra's bottom playfully. "Hmm…I forgive you. And I will spare you an additional spanking tonight, for your brief lapse in judgment. At least, just this once."

The door opened, and two maidservants appeared. Lyra groaned, knowing her red bottom was surely the center of attention in the room. Then, she recognized the voice of old Mamó, who had nursed her as an infant. "Yes, my Princess? You rang for–Oh, my!"

A younger girl, whose voice Lyra didn't recognize, chuckled. "Ar bó! Just lookit' her bonnie, bright red–och!"

Then the younger maid yelped. Very carefully, Lyra panaged to peep out of the corner of her eye without leaving her position in timeout, and saw the girl was about thirteen-years-old, with frizzy mud-brown hair.

At the moment, the young maid was dancing on her tip toes as old Mamó pinched her firmly by the arm. The older woman wagged a bony finger against the girl's nose. "Mind your tongue, Óinseach! You are in the royal presence! Ahem–Your Majesty, how may I serve you?"

There was only a hint of amusement in King Niall's voice. "We could do with a warm fire. Please see that Princess Lyra's bed is warmed, and put her to bed. She is not to leave her place until you call her."

"Understood your majesty. Would you like me to give Princess Lyra a bedtime smacking, before I tuck her in?"

Lyra stiffened, remembering how often old Mamó had both diapered and spanked the Princess's royal bottom over the years.

She heard her father take a heavy step toward the servants. "That should not be necessary. Assuming she obeys her mother's instructions to stay in place facing the wall, that is. But you of course have my permission to discipline her, if needed."

"Oh, I think I don't quite have the arm strength to do it properly these days, but I'm sure Princess Lyra won't give me any trouble. She's a rambunctious little girl, but sweet."

Lyra heard steps, and sensed her father and mother standing right behind her. Her father leaned over to kiss the top of her head. "Good night, my treasure. I'm proud of you for having the courage to accept discipline."

"Thank you, Father."

Mother gently took hold of Lyra's hands and lowered them to her sides, before standing on her tiptoes to kiss her daughter on the cheek. "And let that spanking be a lesson to you!"

The foolish servant girl snorted, barely stifling her giggles.

Trying to ignore her two sets of blazing red cheeks, Lyra took a shaky breath. "Yes, Mother, I will try my best to never forget it. And…Master Kael?"

"Aye, Lass?"

“Thank you, too…for spanking me. I know I forced you to it. I pray I will never act like such a fool ever again. But if I ever do, please do not hesitate to spank me soundly.”

“If your father wills it, then I swear I will. By your leave, My King.”

“You have it.”

“Then my sword hand is yours, to do with as you will.”

Standing at either side of Lyra, the two men clasped hands, and shook firmly. “And my daughter’s bottom is yours, to do with as you will.”

In unison, both men let go of their handshake, then clapped Lyra playfully across her behind, their huge hands easily covering an entire butt cheek. Lyra gasped as she felt the welts across her buttocks stretch taut against the two men’s huge, calloused hands.

“So we have sworn…” said Father.

In that moment, Lyra had an epiphany. Her father’s words were the opening of a sacred, warrior’s oath.

In the lost days of the dark ages, it was not unusual for an honorable pact to be sealed by spanking a young child, who would act as the witness of the agreement. Modern people may scoff, but there was wisdom to the theory. In a world where the tools of reading and writing were uncommon, the idea was that if the child was spanked soundly, they would surely remember the details of the agreement for many years to come, and be able to act as a living memory.

But Lyra knew that she wasn’t merely acting as a witness today. Her bottom was being made the center of an honorable pact. She wasn’t being shamed or degraded. She was being welcomed into her new life, as a student of the sword. Lyra clapped her own hands against the back of King Niall’s and Master Kael’s hands, holding them tightly in place against her own buttocks.

Simultaneously, Master Kael and Lyra both answered with the traditional closing words of the oath. “...So shall we do!”

Father guffawed, and with a final pat, released his hold on his daughter’s buttock. “Then so shall it be! Train your sword arm well, Lyra, or your ass shall pay the price.”

Lyra shivered with excitement. “Yes, My Lord!”

Master Kael bent low to flash Lyra an ominous glance. “Then I will see you at the fencing hall tomorrow at first light. Do not be late, or I’ll spank you so hard, you’ll think this last spanking felt like a tickle. Understood, soldier?”

Lyra felt her heart swell, as tears of joy filled her eyes. “Yes, sir!”

The moment Master Kael released his hold on her behind, Lyra raised her hands high, faltering, before bringing them both down on her own buttocks, with force. She squeaked, then cupped the mottled flesh of her buttocks in her hands, feeling the texture of the overlapping red and purple marks.

Standing tall, Lyra presented her bottom, letting it stand as the symbol of her resolve to be a true swords woman.

There was a moment of silence. Then, Mother, Father, and Kael silently left the room.

After they were gone, Mamó tutted as she finished stoking the fire. “Gets so awful cold in this tower. Careful with the bedwarmer, we don’t want to burn the castle down.”

The servant girl sniggered. “Do we have to? Perhaps her royal highness is feeling too warm as it is.”

There was the sound of a crisp smack, followed by a pained gasp from the servant girl. “That does it. I warned you about minding your tongue, sow. Get your ass down to the servant’s quarters. I’ll deal with you myself presently.”

“But—”

Another slap. “Get moving!”

After the girl was gone, Mamó finished warming the bed, and tapped Lyra on the shoulder, guiding her out of timeout, and towards bed. “I’ve a balm to soothe your hurts.”

Lyra winced as she tried to climb into bed, twisting to lay on her stomach. “But, if the pain is supposed to instruct me…shouldn’t you let me feel the pain?”

Mamó sniffed, and pulled a small clay jar from her shawl. “Nonsense. You’re as stubborn as your papa. Wounds are for mending.”

Lyra didn’t protest, except to mumble softly as Mamó applied the cool balm. It was soothing, even despite the roughness of the old woman’s hands as she massaged it deep into Lyra’s sensitive skin. “I remember when you were a wee bae. You’ve grown into a fine young woman. But…some things never change, I suppose.”

Lyra glanced at the tapestry which artfully depicted her public spanking before the noble knights, lords, and ladies of several realms. “Do you think I’m a foolish girl, to be punished so?”

“Of course you’re a foolish girl. But where’s the shame in that? Fionn mac Cumhaill was the wisest of all the giants, but just ask his mother, and I’m sure she could tell you: even the wisest of all began as a fool.”

[The End?]